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"You Have to Sing Them Correctly!"
Notation and Performance in Cunțană Chant¹

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The most widespread type of Orthodox church music in Transylvania is the *cunțană* chant, whose name comes from the one who published the first volume of church pieces in Western notation, priest Dimitrie Cunțan.² The *cunțană* chant is a version of the neo-Byzantine one, sung monodically by a cantor or by a small size choir, with the text in Romanian. In this article, I will first present the contents of Cunțan's volume and the context in which it was published. I will then discuss the way in which this book is used today in the church music education and the connection between the chants it contains and those performed in church.

Dimitrie Cunțan's chant book

With few exceptions, the transmission of the Orthodox church music in Transylvania was for a long time done exclusively orally.³ It was as late as 1868 when Andrei Șaguna,⁴ Transylvania's

¹ The present paper is the partial outcome of an ongoing research study on church music in Transylvania, carried out at the National Museum of the Romanian Peasant in Bucharest. I extend my warmest thanks to New Europe College, which supported this research through a Ștefan Odobleja fellowship.

² For a very general presentation of the Orthodox church musics in Transylvania see Costin Moisil, "Problems of Identity in the Orthodox Church Music in Transylvania," in *New Europe College Ștefan Odobleja Program. Yearbook 2012-2013*, ed. Irina Vainovski-Mihai (Bucharest: New Europe College), 127-133.

³ The Byzantine notation chant was used in Brașov (South-East of Transylvania) during the 18th and the 19th centuries (Constantin Catrina, *Muzica de tradiție bizantină. Șcheii Brașovului*, Brașov: Arania, 2001, 32-36, 67-77). It is likely that, in isolated cases, cantors who had learned the church chant in Wallachia and Moldavia continued to use the Byzantine notation also after settling in Transylvania, although there is no clear evidence to indicate this (Sebastian Barbu-Bucur, *Cultura muzicală de tradiție bizantină pe teritoriul României în secolul XVIII și începutul secolului XIX și aportul original al culturii autohtone* (Bucharest: Editura Muzicală, 1989), 43, 220-221; Constantin Catrina, *Ipostaze ale muzicii de tradiție bizantină din România* (Bucharest: Editura Muzicală, 2003), 56-57). For two manuscripts with chants in Western notation, written in the Sibiu area in the 1860s, see Sorin Dobre, "Cântarea bisericească din Ardeal într-un manuscris inedit din a doua jumătate a sec. al XIX-lea," in Vasile Grăjdian, Sorin Dobre, Corina Grecu, Iuliana Streza, *Cântarea liturgică ortodoxă din sudul Transilvaniei. Cântarea tradițională de strună în bisericile Arhiepiscopiei Sibiului* (Sibiu: Editura Universității "Lucian Blaga," 2007), 77-109.

⁴ Andrei, baron of Șaguna (1809-1873), bishop since 1848, today worshiped as a saint in the Romanian Orthodox Church, was one of the most active and enlightened hierarchs of Transylvania. As far as church music is



bishop,⁵ urged Dimitrie Cunțan⁶ to record in Western notation all church chants, “for their safer preservation and cultivation.”⁷

At that time, Cunțan had been for four years the music professor of the Theological-Pedagogical Institute in Sibiu. At the date of his appointment as a professor, he had no special training in Western music, although he was familiar with the notation and had been a member of the first Orthodox church music choir singing in parts from Transylvania.⁸ Cunțan bought a piano and took music classes for two years from Ottomar Neubner, former organist and choir conductor of the Catholic Church in Sibiu and considered “the most reputed teacher in Sibiu.”⁹ After he acquired satisfactory knowledge of Western music, he started noting on stave the chants he had learned orally and teaching them to the pupils. The undertaking was carried out gradually, and the last chants were notated as late as 1884.¹⁰ All these chants were first published in 1890, and the volume was afterward reedited posthumously, at times with slight alterations, several times up to present.¹¹

If for bishop Andrei Șaguna the reason for noting the songs had been their preservation, for Cunțan the reason for the notation was first and foremost a practical one: rendering the didactic act easier. According to Cunțan, it was difficult for the pupils to learn the chant in the absence of notation, as they were faced with difficulties in understanding the precise pitch and duration of a sound. The teacher also had difficulty keeping track of whether the pupils had learned correctly the chant taught: “since the chant lacked its visible form, the written notes, one also lacked the most certain means of control: in short, one sung helter-skelter, the same way the birds sung their song.”¹²

concerned, his name is linked to the urge regarding the notation of chants, the foundation of the Theological-Pedagogical Institute in which the church chant was taught and the introduction of harmonic choirs in Transylvania (Catrina, *Muzica*, 93-94).

⁵ In the middle of the 19th century, Transylvania was part of the Austrian Empire. Out of two million Transylvanians, Romanians represented 60% of the population: half of them were Orthodox, and the other half Greek-Catholic. The Greek-Catholic and Orthodox hierarchs were also political leaders of the Romanians, as the Romanians lacked other political institutions. The seat of the Orthodox episcopacy was in Sibiu (Keith Hitchins, *Românii. 1774-1866*, 2nd ed., transl. George G. Potra, Delia Răzdolescu (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2004), 246-247).

⁶ Dimitrie Cunțan, also spelled Cunțanu (1837-1910) was a priest and professor of church music at the Theological-Pedagogical Institute in Sibiu, the highest Romanian educational institution in Transylvania at that time, together with the Greek-catholic seminary in Blaj. He notated and composed church music in one, two and four parts. See Sorin Dobre, “Dimitrie Cunțan – repere biografice,” in *Dimitrie Cunțan (1837-1910) și cântarea bisericească din Ardeal*, ed. Sorin Dobre (Sibiu: Editura Universității “Lucian Blaga,” 2010), 4-24.

⁷ Dimitrie Cunțanu, *Cântările bisericesci. După melodiile celor Opt-Glasuri ale sfintei biserici ortodoxe, culese, puse pe note și arangeate de...* (Sibiu: Editura autorului, 1890), 4.

⁸ Dobre, “Dimitrie Cunțan,” 10.

⁹ Cunțan, quoted in Dobre, “Dimitrie Cunțan,” 11.

¹⁰ These are the *automela* (sg. *automelon*). I am using in this article the terms from Greek since they are regularly found in the studies on Orthodox church music in English. The reader who does not have a special interest in church music is kindly asked to disregard these categories, on which I will make comments mainly in footnotes). *Automela* were becoming extinct, and Cunțan had only learned a few of them. In order to recuperate them, Cunțan resorted to an old cantor, Simeon Florea, and noted the chants as the latter sung them (Cunțanu, 5).

¹¹ For the first edition see footnote 7. The following editions: 2nd ed., ed. Candid Popa, Aurel Popovici, Timotei Popovici (Sibiu: Institutul de Arte Grafice Ios. Drotleff, 1925); 3rd ed., ed. Timotei Popovici (Sibiu: Institutul de Arte Grafice Kraft & Drotleff S. A., 1932); 4th ed., ed. Timotei Popovici (Sibiu: Institutul de Arte Grafice Kraft & Drotleff S. A., 1943); 5th ed., ed. Petru Stanciu (Cluj-Napoca: Renașterea, 2010). Chants from Cunțan’s volume were taken over in collections as *Cântări bisericești*, ed. Vasile Grăjdian (Sibiu, 1994); *Cântările Sfintei Liturghii și alte cântări liturgice la sărbătorile de peste an*, 2nd ed., ed. Vasile Stanciu (Cluj-Napoca: Renașterea, 2011) etc.

¹² Cunțan, quoted in Dobre, “Dimitrie Cunțan,” 11.



The volume contained 55 pieces sung at the Divine Liturgy and another 73 pieces which served as a model for the other approximately 20,000 hymns used for other services (Vespers, Matins etc.) throughout an entire liturgical year. 27 of these were basic models, three or four for each of the eight modes (*echoi*) of the Orthodox chant,¹³ and the rest were particular models for narrower categories (*stichera automela*, *kathismata*, *apolytikia*, *exapostelaria* etc.).

All pieces were notated in a 2-beat meter (2/4 or, more seldom, *alla breve*). As far as the modal system is concerned, most of the times Cunțan used key signatures consistent with the last note of the piece, seen as the first degree of the scale: for instance, mode 1 was noted as E minor, with E as the last note of the piece and F sharp in the key signature, mode 2 as G major etc.¹⁴ If the mode differed significantly from the Western major or minor, the key signature was absent or chosen taking into account other considerations. For instance, mode 6, an E mode with the first tetrachord chromatic (E – F – G # – A), had no key signature, and mode 4 (whose first degree and final was F sharp and the pitches used were D – E – F # – G – A – B – C – D) bore the signature of D major, although C was always natural.¹⁵

With most of the chants, a syllable lasted one or two beats, but one could also find syllables that lasted four or six beats. Few pieces were melismatic and contained several syllables with longer duration, of up to 20 beats.

We have little information about the way in which the chant book was used at that time in the learning process and in church. What we know is confined to a few recommendations of the author in the volume's preface regarding how to learn the model chants and apply the model's melody for a duplicate hymn. The chants were learned one by one. The student had to be able to sing each piece by himself, at the beginning following the chant in the book, then by heart, and finally, reproducing only the melody and using instead of the text the syllables *a* or *la*. In the second stage, the melody learned was "applied" – in the author's own expression and in the cantors' expression nowadays as well – on various hymns whose texts were found in a worship book called *Octoechos* (Rom.: *Octoih*). The application consisted in adjusting the melody to the new text, which many times differed from that of the model as far as the length of the verses and the stress position were concerned. Once a model was learned, the student proceeded to learning the next model. After the application of the second model had been learned, the students revised the first model; after the third model that they learned, they revised the second, and so on. A larger revision was recommended after each series of four-five models.¹⁶

¹³ For each mode were given the *kekragarion*, the first *sticheron anastasimon*, the *apolytikion*, and for some modes also the melody of *anabathmoi*. The division into eight modes has liturgic reasons; from a musical point of view, the number of modes is higher.

¹⁴ More seldom, the piece may close on another pitch than the first degree (for instance on the fourth degree in some *automela* in mode 1 or the second degree with the first *automelon* in mode 4).

¹⁵ I will not go into details here regarding the modal system and its relation to the Byzantine modal system. A table of all key signatures from Cunțan's volume can be found in Elena Chircev, *Amprente românești în muzica de tradiție bizantină. Studii* (Cluj-Napoca: Risoprint, 2013), 196.

¹⁶ Cunțanu, 5-6.



The musical education of nowadays cantors

I will describe the musical education of the cantors as it comes out from the interviews I conducted on the field in 2012 and 2013 with cantors and priests of various ages from villages Sadu (Sibiu), Derșida (Sălaj), Nicula (Cluj), Pietroasa (Bihor) and towns Alba Iulia and Satu Mare. I have also used information from the field research conducted by fathers Vasile Grăjdian and Sorin Dobre in Sibiu County between 2002 and 2005.¹⁷

As in so many other cultures, the education of the professional Orthodox cantors in Transylvania begins by familiarization with music as early as childhood. Most of them are believers who have attended church since they were little, have listened to its music and learned some pieces by heart. Apart from these, the cantors benefit from a more or less formal training period, depending on whether they are students at the theological seminaries (high schools) or the theology faculties, or they are mere parishioners who happened to become cantors. I will discuss in what follows the educational process for each of these two categories.

The students and the seminar pupils study the Music subject for four-five years, two or three hours per week.¹⁸ For the students who did not graduate from the theological seminary, but from a regular high school, this number of hours proves to be insufficient: most of them cannot learn the profession of cantor only during their university training. Both at the seminary and at the university, the learning process happens similarly. The students learn a number of pieces from Cunțan's collection and from other books, which can vary according to the teacher and the place. Most of the 55 standard pieces from Cunțan's volume are not studied, and they are replaced by other versions widely spread throughout Romania.¹⁹ Also, only a third of the chant models are studied, and these are used as well in the case of hymns which in the past were supposed to be sung following more special models.²⁰

The basic learning method is repetition: the teacher sings, after which the tens of students repeat together, following the score, until the melody is satisfactorily learned. The transmission of the chants makes thus use of the written notation, but not in a decisive manner. Even if the students spend some time studying the elements of the Western notation, they do not get to master it to such an extent as to decipher a new chant by themselves. In other words, they do not learn *how to read a new score* (any score), but they learn *a number of chants written on a score*. The first they learn are the pieces from the Liturgy, after which follow the pieces used as model.

Once the models are memorized, the students learn how to "apply" them, that is how to adapt model melodies to texts without musical notation. The application is learned in class, but even

¹⁷ Grăjdian, *Cântarea liturgică*.

¹⁸ The information was provided to me during the field interviews and reflects the circumstances lived (and remembered) by the interviewees. Today the number of classes may be lower, unlike the beginning of the 1990s, when the students of the seminary studied music for six hours per week.

¹⁹ The pieces for the Divine Liturgy can be found, for instance, in *Cîntările Sfintei Liturghii și alte cîntări bisericești* (Bucharest: Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune Ortodoxă al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, 1992), a volume which had numerous reprints. For the generalization of a unique version of chants for the Liturgy in Romania, see Costin Moisil, "Romanian Church Music: Tradition and Revival," in *The Past in the Present. Papers Read at the IMS Intercongressional Symposium and the 10th Meeting of the Cantus Planus, Budapest & Visehrad, 2000*, ed. László Doboszay, vol. 2 (Budapest: Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music, 2003), 89-101.

²⁰ One does not study in particular the first *sticheron*, as the *kekragarion* is considered sufficient as a model. Also, one does not learn *stichera automela*, *kathismata*, *exaposteilaria*, as for most of them the *apolytikion* is used as a model.



better live, in church, as the practice one acquires during church service is part of the curriculum requirements. The students have the duty to act as cantors, in turn, according to a certain schedule, at the chapel of the seminary or of the university or in another church in town.

As a very general rule, in urban churches the cantor is a graduate of the seminary or even a pupil with more advanced knowledge. At the villages, most of the cantors are however not graduates of the seminary, but of an intensive course of six months, for several hours each Saturday. Naturally, the time allocated to this course is not sufficient for someone unacquainted to gain minimal competence in the church chant, but the students are almost always cantors with certain experience. For them, attending the course means in the first place acquiring *typikon* knowledge – the complex set of rules that prescribes the order of the chants at church services – as well as a degree which allows them to be hired as cantors, for a small amount of money.

But how do the rural cantors learn church music, since they do not attend any other formal schools beside this course? Each cantor has his story. One learned music from the previous cantor – who happened to be his relative – beside whom he sang over the years. Another one went through a very compressed training period with the former cantor who, in his old age, decided to retire in a few weeks. A third one was urged and taught to sing by the priest newly arrived in the village who was trying to bring liturgical freshness and seriousness, including in what concerned the chant. A fourth learned mostly by himself, making use of the didactic CDs distributed by the archpriest.

Unlike Wallachia and Moldavia, the cantors in Transylvania seem less willing to share their knowledge with the others. I met cantors who confessed that the ones who had preceded them did not wish to share their cantor position with anyone and drove the potential apprentices away from the *kliros* (Rom.: *strană*), the church area reserved to the liturgical books and to the cantor. Thus, especially in the village, the long term apprenticeship of the student beside the maestro is less important in learning the chants and the profession of a cantor than in the South and East of Romania.

For the village cantors, the notation plays a less significant role in learning the chant than for the seminary students. There are also village cantors who are familiar with the notation. In a similar fashion to those from the cities, but to a larger extent, they are not readers of the score, but rather followers of the melody profile, up and down the stave. Outside school, the books with musical notation are rarely used. Most of the times, both in the village and in the city, the cantors use for the church service liturgical books that only have the literary text; they know the melodies by heart.²¹

The field experience in contemporary Transylvania can be useful in understanding the musical education from Cunțan's time. It is quite likely that back then, just as today, the students did not learn the technique of solfège, but used the notation in order to be able to memorize a series of pieces. Learning a new piece did not require a solfège in the initial stage, as the chant was learned by imitation. This explains why during the first stage of learning, the chant was intoned with the literary text, while extracting the melody from the chant and intoning it with *a* or *la* was a much more difficult step, to which one moved only after the chant had been thoroughly learned.

Model and variants

When applying to a hymn the melody of the model, the cantor divides on the spot the text of the hymn in literary units of a few words, to which he ascribes a musical phrase taken from the

²¹ See also Grăjdian, *Cântarea liturgică*, 133-135.



model chant. Basically, the order of the musical phrases from the model chant should be found in the duplicate chant as well. As the corresponding literary fragments from the model differ in the number of syllables and position of accents, the cantor performs changes on the musical phrases in the model (dilations, compressions, changes of formulae etc.) so as to adjust them to the literary text of the duplicate (Fig. 1).

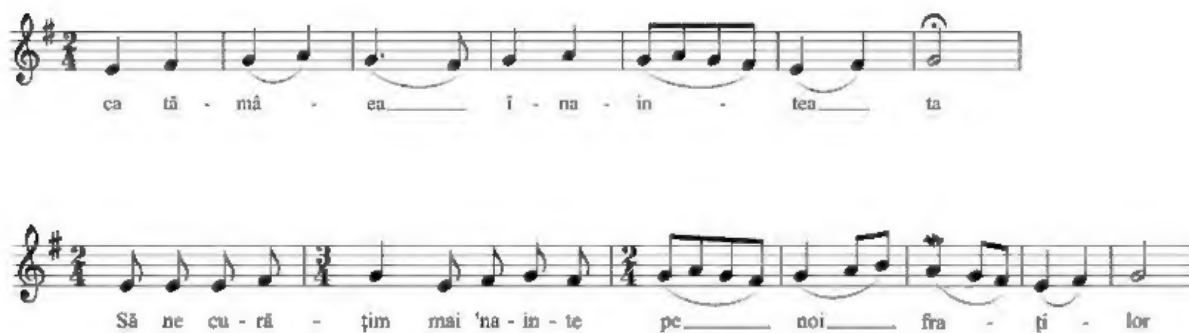


Fig.1. Top: A formula from Cunțan's book (*Să se îndrepteze*, mode 1, Cunțanu, 8). Bottom: the same formula as applied by Nelu Chirca from Sadu, Sibiu county (*Să ne curățim*, mode 1, sticheron for the Sunday of the Last Judgement).

In practice, it is not seldom that deviations from this general rule occur. The cantors also use melodic phrases that are not to be found in the model and neither are they found in other chants from Cunțan's book.²² Equally, they use a limited number of phrases, especially those at the beginning of the chant, which they repeat several times. Often, the cantors keep from a musical phrase of the model only the ending (the equivalent of 3-4 syllables), while the preceding part of the phrase is replaced by a melodic recitative. In the places where there are more cantors, as is the case for the church of the Dormition in Sadu, a cantor may sing the first part of the phrase by himself, and the others will join for the cadence (Fig. 2).

²² See also Grăjdian, *Cântarea liturgică*, 66.



O ce ceas va fi a - tun cea
a - tun cea
și ce zi în - fri - co - șa - tă când va șe - dea ju - de - că - to - rul pe sca - u - nul cel în -
u - nul cel în -
fri - co - șat căr - ți - le se vor des - chi - de
fri - co - șat se vor des - chi - de

Fig. 2. O, ce ceas (fragment), mode 6, sticheron for the Sunday of the Last Judgement, sung by Nelu Chirca (top) together with other three cantors (bottom).

The variants that come out following this application may seem to an outside observer very different from each other. This is heightened by the fact that even if in the book the chants are notated in a measured way (2-beat meter), some cantors perform the chants in a free rhythm: certain parts of the musical phrase, particularly the beginnings, are performed faster, while others are slower (Fig. 3). For insiders however, the differences between variants are less important: the fact that a cantor sings the first part of the phrase recitatively and another cantor melodically, or that one sings in a measured way and another in a rubato way, seems not to be an occasion for controversy.



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princeps edition met with opposition.²⁴ The *cunțană* music expresses both a regional identity, and a denominational one, and the attempts to change it, be it even superficially, are perceived as attacks on the Orthodox and Transylvanian identity of those who practice it.

Despite the respect for Cunțan's book and the care shown so that the former should not undergo changes in the printed form, in practice one can find important deviations from it, especially with the village cantors. In the example given in Fig. 4 (*Doamne, strigat-am*,²⁵ the first model chant for mode 3), the variants performed by Nicolae Popa (Apoldul de Jos) and Ioan Albu (Șelimbăr) use formulae from the model but not all of them, and the former even adds a new formula.²⁶ The latter uses only the first formulae of the model, which he repeats. Instead, he chooses to sing the text in a more concise form, without repeating certain fragments.²⁷

Text	Cunțan's book (p. 14)	Nicolae Popa	Ioan Albu
Doamne strigat-am	1	1	–
către tine auzi-mă	2	2	
auzi-mă Doamne	3	New	
Doamne strigat-am	1	1	1
către Tine auzi-mă	2		
ia aminte	1		
glasul	4	6	2
rugăciunii mele	3		
când strig către Tine	5	2	1
auzi-mă Doamne	6	New	2

Fig. 4. Division of the *kekragarion*, mode 3, into musical phrases (formulae) in Cunțan's book and in the performances of Nicolae Popa and Ioan Albu.

Discussing the problem of the collective creation and of the variants in oral cultures, in contrast with the Western works, with a precise author and an immutable appearance, Constantin Brăiloiu said: "In the absence of any unchallengeable text we have to admit that we never collect more than variants and that in the singers' minds lives latently an ideal archetype of which they

²⁴ Grăjdian, *Cântarea liturgică*, 55-57. The alterations in the text – when they are regarded as a better translation of the Greek original and have previously received the endorsement of the hierarchy – seem to be more easily accepted than the musical ones (see Cunțanu, 5th ed., 18-20).

²⁵ Lord, I have cried, the first part of the *kekragarion*. The text of the chant is the first verse from Psalm 141 (140 according to the Septuagint). The pieces come from the DVD attached to Grăjdian, *Cântarea liturgică*, and are titled CD 011/06 and CD 016/07.

²⁶ In the catalogue of the field recordings, Rev. Vasile Grăjdian makes the following remark: "although declared as a form of mode 3, it seems to be a combined form (with elements of mode 2)" (Grăjdian, *Cântarea liturgică*, 208).

²⁷ The form from Cunțan's volume, in which fragments from the first verse are intoned before the beginning per se of the psalm, is the common one in Byzantine music. Albu sings the text as it appears in the worship books with no musical notation.



offer ephemeral incarnations.”²⁸ Likewise, somewhere else:²⁹

The oral “work” only exists in the memory of whoever adopts it, and only becomes concrete by his will: their lives are intertwined. Since no writing stabilizes the composition once and for all, this work is not a “finished object” but an object that is made and remade perpetually. That is to say that all the individual performances of a melodic pattern are equally true and of the same weight in the balance of judgement. That is also to say that the “instinct for variation” is not merely a simple passion for varying but a necessary consequence of the lack of any unchallengeable model.

Variants as those in Fig. 4 show that Brăiloiu’s considerations are valid, at least in part, for the *cunțană* chant as well. For some cantors, any chant *has* an unchallengeable model, which is to be found in Cunțan’s volume and can be reproduced “identically” as many times as needed. However, for a large part of the cantors, especially those in the countryside who learned to sing without the help of notation, the model in the book is unchallengeable only at the level of discourse. In practice, the real model is the archetype in their mind, of which Brăiloiu speaks, and the variants which the cantors generate – be they *giusto* or *rubato*, with more or fewer formulae – are just as valid, on condition that they be “sung correctly.” Hence, the correctness of a performance is checked by reference not so much to Cunțan’s notation, as to the mental archetype. The faithful rendition of the piece notated by Cunțan is nothing more than one of the actualizations of the archetype.

The question that arises is whether Cunțan himself saw his pieces noted and taught to the students – leaving aside the 55 pieces for the Liturgy – as “unchallenged texts” or, on the contrary, as “ephemeral incarnations.” The first answer might be advocated by certain terms used by Cunțan – “the necessity ... for the melodies of church chants to be *established* (Rom.: *fixeze*) by setting them to notes”; “for their safer *preservation*” (my emphasis) –, as well as by his condescending opinion of the “primitive” manner of teaching orally and his admiring view on the notation, the only one capable of ordering the chant and offering it “forms closer to the progressive taste.”³⁰ Nonetheless, in my opinion, the second answer has higher chances of being the real one. What Cunțan wanted to preserve was not a rigid variant of a piece learned from his teachers, but what he called “melody” – Brăiloiu’s archetype – and what he called “model-chants” were only pieces through which the “melody” was taught to the students.³¹ They were *models* of application of the melody, which had been notated with a didactic purpose. The purpose of education was not so much

²⁸ Constantin Brăiloiu, *Problems of Ethnomusicology*, ed. and transl. A. L. Lloyd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 46.

²⁹ Brăiloiu, 105. The two quotes come from articles written in 1949 and 1959. Victor A. Stoichiță shows that in the latter Brăiloiu offers a deeper insight into the collective musical creation than in the first text. Brăiloiu gives up the idea of archetype, replacing it with that of an “object that is made and remade perpetually” in “the lack of any unchallengeable model.” (Victor A. Stoichiță, “Constantin Brăiloiu et la création musicale collective,” in *Mémoire vive. Homages à Constantin Brăiloiu*, ed. Laurent Aubert (Gollion: Infolio; Geneva: Musée d’ethnographie de Genève, 2009), 73–86; Romanian version: “Constantin Brăiloiu și creația muzicală colectivă,” in *Memorie activă. Omagiu lui Constantin Brăiloiu*, transl. Speranța Rădulescu (Bucharest: Martor, 2011), 73–86). For the limited purpose of the present article, I will disregard the differences of nuance between the two visions.

³⁰ Cunțanu, 4. Dobre, “Dimitrie Cunțan,” 10.

³¹ See also the subtitles of the first two sections: “The fundamental melodies of the ‘Eight-Modes’ with text from the ‘Octoechos’ as *models* or *norms* to the application of the text of the chant from all liturgic books”; “Variants following the fundamental melodies of the ‘Eight-Modes’ as *models*” (Cunțanu, 8, 32, emphasis in the original).



the *ad litteram* learning of the model-chants – this was an intermediary step – but learning the melody that was going to be applied to the new hymns. My hypothesis is supported by the fact that, for many of the melodies, Cunțan provides several models in the volume,³² but his indications for application refer to the melody, not to a certain model: “Following the melodies of the *kekragara* and their *stichera* with *stichoi*, we sing: 1. All *stichera* ...”³³ Moreover, both in 1889, in a memo to the Archdiocese Consistory, and in the preface of the printed volume, Cunțan stated that he notated the chants “as I had learned them by hearing them,” although a report which would compare in 1891 the print with the manuscript observed “numerous changes according to the figures customary in our traditional church chants, without causing an alteration of the character of the respective chants though.”³⁴ Consequently, Cunțan was not interested in noting a piece in a frozen form – had that been the case, it would have meant that every variant in the manuscript had been learned identically from his teachers and would not have needed “numerous alterations” – but in noting variants as suitable as possible to the didactic purpose.

The role of Cunțan’s volume seems similar to that which Christian Troelsgård ascribes to the Byzantine *sticherarion*.³⁵ Similar to the latter, Cunțan’s book was meant to be used not so much during service, as for the training of cantors and as a reference for performing the chants, and its function was not to preserve a certain repertoire, but a certain “style as a whole,” defined here as the sum of melodies. Likewise, his notation can be analogously described as “neither ‘descriptive’ (recording a given performance, the notation being posterior to the performance), nor ‘prescriptive’ (governing a performance, the notation being prior to performance), but rather as ‘paradigmatic,’ providing patterns and examples of texts set to melodies in the traditional ... style.”³⁶

English version by Ioana Stamatescu

³² For each mode, the melody for the *stichera* has two models; for the *apolytikia* of each mode, there is one model in Section I and one, two or none in Section III; *kathismata* have a melody with two models and another with three models etc.

³³ Cunțanu, 6.

³⁴ Dobre, “Dimitrie Cunțan,” 11, 19.

³⁵ Christian Troelsgård, “What Kind of Chant Books Were the Byzantine *Sticheraria*?” in *Cantus Planus. Papers Read at the 9th Meeting. Esztergom & Veszprém*, ed. László Doboszay (Budapest: Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Institute for Musicology, 2001), 563-574.

³⁶ Troelsgård, 571.